

UNCLASSIFIED 2/27/79

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

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PARTICIPANTS: Diana Haydeé Negronida de Barrera, Wife of
PCR Union Leader Diego Barrera (Case
No. 519/78/9)
F. Allen Harris, Political Officer,
American Embassy, Buenos Aires

DATE : February 27, 1979

SUBJECT : Disappearance and Reappearance of Diego Barrera

Mrs. Barrera called at the Embassy to discuss prospects of her husband's release from executive detention. She presented the following information regarding her husband's abduction, subsequent reappearance and detention:

Abduction

Mrs. Barrera said that her husband, Diego Barrera, was a 34-year old shipwright at the Astilleros Rio Santiago which she claimed is the largest shipbuilding facility in Latin America. Barrera was also a PCR union leader at the shipyard. In March, 1977 Barrera was fired from his job in the shipyard. He then found work repairing tile sidewalks and cobblestone streets in La Plata. On July 14, 1978 when he was returning home from his work he was abducted by a group of armed men.

Mrs. Barrera filed several habeas corpus petitions in his behalf. A close friend of his, Rodolfo Francisco Nanni, (Case No. 520/78/9) a 32-year old furniture salesman who in 1975 had been the PCR leader in the La Plata University Faculty of Engineering was arrested eight days before Barrera's abduction on July 6, 1978. Another friend of Nanni's, Rodolfo Julio Tiscornia was also arrested on July 14, 1978. Tiscornia was a 23-year old architectural student was freed at the end of August, 1978. Tiscornia was not a PCR activist, just a friend of Nanni's.

Interrogation and Torture

Mrs. Barrera stated that her husband reported that he was tortured during his interrogation with the electric picana. He said that during a number of picana applications, a pillow was placed over his face preventing him from breathing.

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ARGENTINA PROJECT (S200000044)

U.S. DEPT. OF STATE, A/RPS/IPS

Margaret P. Grafeid, Director

☒ Release ☐ Excise ☐ Deny

Exemption(s):

Declassify: ☐ In Part ☒ In Full

☐ Classify as ☐ Extend as ☐ Downgrade to

Date Declassify on Reason

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Mrs. Barreda said that the focus of Barreda's interrogation -- in addition to every conceivable detail of his personal history, family and friends -- was his activities with the Partido Comunista Revolucionario (PCR) and its members. At one point during her husband's interrogation Mrs. Barreda alleged that four persons stood and jumped up and down on Barreda's chest.

Reappearance

Nanni and Barreda reappeared on October 10, 1978 at the Provincial Police Station No. 8 in La Plata. Both Barreda and Nanni were charged with crimes before a military court. Mrs. Barreda said that the military "juez de instruccion" took declarations from both Nanni and Barreda in September, 1978, prior to their reappearance. Barreda reported to his wife that he signed a confession during his interrogation while he was hospitalized. He said he did not read the document. He reported that he was told that if he refused to sign the paper before him he would be killed.

Detention and Judicial Proceedings

Mrs. Barreda said that her husband was charged before the military court with membership in a prescribed party and possession of a party newspaper. Mrs. Barreda acknowledges that her husband was a member of the PCR, but she denied that he had a copy of the party newspaper when he was arrested as he was coming home from work. She noted that the Barreda home was never searched.

Mrs. Barreda said that the military court found that there was insufficient evidence to try Mr. Barreda. However, shortly after the military court's decision the same charges were brought against Mr. Barreda before the civil criminal court. Mr. Barreda's civil criminal trial is scheduled to begin around the first of April. He was also placed under the Poder Ejecutivo Nacional and continues in that status to Mrs. Barreda's knowledge.

Drafter's Comments

Mrs. Barreda's statement presents a mid-1978 example of the operation of the Argentine anti-subversive system directed against a former PCR activist. Mrs. Barreda believes, but

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is not certain if the husband's abduction was triggered by information provided by his PCR colleague, Rudolfo Nanni. Other PCR contacts claim that these arrests were triggered by PCR anti-Beagle war activities in La Plata in which both men participated.

Although there is no way to confirm the allegations contained in Mrs. Barreda's statement regarding torture, the other data regarding the Nanni and Tiscornia abductions is confirmed by independent family and PCR party reports.

Mrs. Barreda's statement is an indication that La Plata anti-subversive operations were using abduction and torture as of mid-July 1978 against "non-armed" targets.

Of interest is also the fact that the military court dismissed the charges against Barreda, although he had signed a confession previously. It should also be noted that the crime of illegal political activity is bailable. However, possession of a party newspaper is a crime under the general subversion law and bail is not permitted, according to human rights groups lawyers.

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